

Culture, Language and Globalization among the Moldavian Csángós Today



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Teaching and Participant Observation: Interconnections of Culture and Language in an Eastern- European Local Society

Abstract

To study in one's native language is a general right supported by the European Union. Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa, a Finnish social scientist and politician, initiated CoE recommendation 1521 in 2001 regarding these rights of the Moldavian Csángós in Romania. The Moldavian Csángós are a minority of Hungarian origin, the vast majority of the Roman-Catholic faith, most of them being bilingual and speaking different local Hungarian dialects.

Nowadays, it is almost a commonplace statement in Hungarian scholarly and public discourse that the 'Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study in their own mother tongue'. However, it is worth taking a closer look at the context and presumptions of this statement.

For an ethnologist, teaching Hungarian for an academic year in one of the Csángó villages can be considered as a useful, as well as a controversial, means to be frequently present in the field. In this context it might also be seen as a socio-political act aiming to save the local Hungarian dialect, the Csángó culture and minority from fully assimilating into the Romanian nation. Nevertheless, my aims are to recognize and comprehend the inner meanings and implications of the matter of teaching.

In this paper, I present details of events that occurred during my teaching period in Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra, Bacău, Romania. My aim is to highlight matters about the ways native people and outsiders consider the opportunity to learn Hungarian as a “mother tongue”, about the local conflicts generated by the option of Hungarian language lessons and its connections to the Csángó social space of multiple cultural and linguistic ties.

1. Introduction

In my paper¹ I wish to trace the present challenges of Hungarian education and teaching Hungarian as a ‘mother tongue’ in a particular Moldavian Csángó [ča:ngo:] local community, in Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra.² I will not examine all the aspects of the recent challenges of Hungarian education in Moldavia, but I try to interpret the conflicts generated by the encounters of national idea, ‘mother tongue’ and the present traits of the Csángó culture. While I investigate this question, certain peculiarities of the Csángó people will be revealed. On the one hand, the specific features of the Csángó social space are the dialogic quality of the Csángó culture and the constant presence of a transcultural social space. On the other hand, the structure of their sociocultural system is characterized by ‘compound non-synchronism’. My suggestions are formulated on the basis of my anthropological fieldwork since 2005, in particular stationary fieldwork carried out in 2006–2007

1. This study has been prepared with the generous help of the MTA-DE Ethnology Research Group, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It is based on my PhD research (see the thesis in English <http://ganymedes.lib.unideb.hu:8080/dea/bitstream/2437/103477/6/Lajos%20Veronika%20teziszfuzet_angol-t.pdf>.) supervised by Professor Róbert Keményfi at the Department of Ethnology, University of Debrecen, Hungary. Hereby I would like to thank to researcher Petteri Laihonon, PhD for inviting me to the Csángó seminar in Jyväskylä in March 2012. I am also thankful to other scholars, Magdolna Kovács, Juliet Langman and the two anonymous peer-reviewers, for their kind suggestions on how to develop my ideas in the text.

2. Throughout the text I use two terms, Moldavian Csángó and Csángó, referring to the same minority in Eastern Romania, situated in the valleys of the river Trotuș, Prut and Szeret/Șiret.

in the above-mentioned Csángó village, Lujzikalagor, where I was a teacher of Hungarian in the same academic year.³



Picture 1. Going home from work, Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra. September, 2012. Photo: Veronika Lajos.

Lujzikalagor is situated quite close, 10 kilometres, to the county town, Bákó/Bacău. Due to its proximity to the cultural, economic and political centre of the county, the rural community of the village has a complex relation with the urban world. Inhabitants commute to their workplace; children attend town schools; housewives go to the market place in the city; relatives, who have already moved to the urban area, regularly return to help out their family members in completing seasonal agricultural activities and so forth. (See Picture 1.)

The village is one of the Csángó settlements where most of the adult inhabitants still speak the local Hungarian dialect, which I shall

3. The collected material – interviews, manuscripts and transcripts of occasional conversations – and fieldwork notes are in the author’s possession. According to the standard procedure of ethnology and cultural anthropology I keep my conversation partners name and other identifiable characters in anonymity or in disguise to avoid causing any possible harm (material, social, moral or even physical) to them or to any other locals.

call Csángó applying the local practice.⁴ I did not conduct any linguistic research about the status of the language. According to my everyday experiences, I may say that language assimilation to Romanian is well underway in Lujzikalagor, as Vilmos Tánzos's research (2008–2010) also shows: 55% (2502 people) of the local inhabitants speak the local Hungarian dialect and 71% (3247 people) understand it (Tánzos 2012a: 247).⁵ Csángó is usually used in everyday communication among people above the age of 50/60; it is rather intra-generational then intergenerational. Elderly locals live by specific traditions kept orally, both in the field of folklore and popular beliefs. Besides, recent research in the field of sociolinguistics (Bodó 2012: 31–49) suggests that Csángós who remain in their local surroundings and work in the agricultural sector are re-socialized in the local Hungarian dialect of their village (Bodó calls this second language socialization 2012: 36). To learn the Csángó dialect in this case is part of the process of being accepted in the world of the adults of the settlement, so it serves as a means to gain full group membership among the adults. It means that the processes of language assimilation do not point determinedly and irreversibly to the complete dissolution of the local Hungarian dialects and urge us to consider the notion of assimilation as a bit more complex process than one of culture loss and deprivation.

Recently, it is widely accepted in the Hungarian scholarly and public discourse, and it is not unknown even in the international scene due to the Council of Europe (CoE) report and recommendation that the Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study in their own mother tongue. CoE Recommendation 1521 requested that “the possibility to

be educated in the mother tongue should be ensured in accordance with the Romanian Constitution and the legislation on education.” (9. i.).⁶ However, we shall immediately stop here and dwell on the inner meanings and implications of these statements, taking a closer look at the referential context and presumptions of the first sentence. First of all, the ‘Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study’ part implies that ordinary Csángó people have significant intentions to learn Hungarian language in schools. Secondly, the approach of the Hungarian side (scholars, politicians and laymen) automatically considers Hungarian language to be the mother tongue of the Csángó community. This approach does not distinguish between the language usage of different generations or genders; neither has it made any use of the achievements of sociolinguistic investigations stating that there can be more than one mother tongue in one's lifetime. The sphere of meaning of the term “mother tongue” is very changeable in a minority-majority environment. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1984:18) classified the mother tongue definitions that are general in everyday, academic and official uses according to four criteria: origin, competence, function and attitude – from both internal and external identification. None of these criteria by themselves would provide an answer static in its temporality and content as regards the mother tongue of the individual. In this case one should recognize that the linguistic reality of the Moldavian Csángós may differ from the meaning of the mother tongue definition, but should also realize that the identification of the mother tongue is an obligatory institutional option encoded in the approach defined by national ideology. However, in many cases, it is the parents and the grandparents, and not necessarily the children, who exhibit emotional attitudes towards the Hungarian language (internal identification – the individual's own definition of the mother tongue), in fact, in case of these generations Csángó, the local Hungarian dialect can have the most commonly used language status in their local settings (function).

At the same time, the Hungarian political context – be it an expression of public opinion, a political agenda, or a scholarly discourse – holds the lack of education in Hungarian as an example of deliberate exclusion on the part of the official educational institutions and the Romanian state. The third implication of the statement is connected to

4. I follow the scholars who consider Csángó not to be an independent language, but one of the many dialects of Hungarian standard. For counterarguments for a Csángó koiné see, for example, Sándor 2000: 141–168, Sándor 2005: 163–186.

5. According to the population and housing census in 2002, 4590 people inhabited Lujzikalagor, of whom 4527 were Roman Catholic (98,62%), 50 Orthodox, 11 Adventist and 2 belonged to another kind of faith. According to the 2011 census, the population of Lujzikalagor is 3553, of whom 3243 are Roman-Catholic (91,27 %), 67 Orthodox, 7 Adventist and 2 Muslim. In 2011, 3283 people considered themselves to be Romanian, 31 Hungarian and 3 Turkish. Less than 3 people claimed Csángó as their ethnic identity, therefore the exact number is not shown in the census. Regarding the question of mother tongue, 3283 people (92,40 %) claimed Romanian as their native language, 35 Hungarian (and 1 Turkish). See the official site of the census: <<http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>> (last accessed in 26 June 2014).

6. See the CoE recommendation: <<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta01/EREC1521.htm>>.

the second one, since it is also presumed that Csángó people attribute a special value to the Hungarian language as other people with Hungarian national identity do, and associate national affiliation, in a modern sense, to the Hungarian language (defined as a national language) as well as to the use of the local Hungarian dialect. There are other examples as well where an ethnic or national affiliation does not imply the same attachment to the use of the traditional language, such as the case of the Irish.

2. Multiple linguistic and cultural ties in the Csángó social context

In this part of the paper I examine the implications of the initial statement that Moldavian Csángó people cannot study in their own mother tongue. The first implication that Csángó people would like to learn Hungarian language in schools by their own will, fails immediately when one realizes that many locals usually do not even know about the option of studying Hungarian in state schools or outside the educational institutions in study groups. Furthermore, as responding to the recent changes of their surroundings in a dialogic way, many Csángó mothers have been teaching Romanian to their children as the first language. What counts for them in the long run is to make their children capable of speaking both languages, the local Hungarian dialect and Romanian, and of making use of the particular cultural knowledge in a successful way in each sociocultural reality. This kind of attitude basically considers language as an instrument to achieving success in life, as a means of communication, usually not associated with modern national affiliation or national emotions. It does not mean that they do not attach emotions to language, but it usually does not correspond with national affiliation.

For a better understanding of the situation, a decisive attribution of the Csángó life-world should be pointed out. The Moldavian Csángó socio-cultural reality is a social space that generates multiple cultural and linguistic ties. It requires a constant ability to find one's way between two cultural systems of relationships in the same physical environment, i.e., between the differences of the Csángó and the

Romanian cultures; expecting any individual to participate and come up to the challenges posed by the Csángó and Romanian cultural environment. The condition for successful orientation in the social sphere is the appropriate use of the socio-cultural sets of knowledge of both worlds and the creative, "optional" and situation-dependent application of the cultural information sets.

Today the social reality of Lujzikalagor is decisively characterized by the in-between nature of cultures, a uniquely colourful network of Csángó-Romanian cultural peculiarities. In the socio-cultural existence of the inhabitants of Lujzikalagor, there are organically parallel but functionally differing communal traditions, operating within identical geographical frameworks. In the micro-environment (in the village and also in the city, Bákó, that is organically related to the local world), the transition between the Csángó and Romanian cultures is a routine and natural possibility. Thus, the simultaneous and continuous presence in both cultural environments, i.e., the doubled presence in two differing cultural traditions, is a given possibility.

The multiple linguistic and cultural ties of the Moldavian Csángó existence have helped to resolve symbolic borderline situations connected to the issue of modernization, such as in the case of the old woman's life I touched upon in my other paper in this volume, on a number of different occasions. This socio-cultural setting or milieu does indeed support the activation of affirmative peasant adaptivity to a great extent. The tolerance encoded in the multiple ties and the lack of absolute exclusivity draw our attention to two important phenomena. First, that for the members of the Moldavian Csángó society the multiple attachments imply the capacity of acknowledging the similarities with the culturally different, by understanding the Other. Second, it demonstrates that assimilation changes are multi-directional processes, that is during assimilation the one assimilated is not just simply "losing" from their socio-cultural ties, but is gaining new ties as well through their "becoming similar to something formerly different" (see Gábor Biczó's works on assimilation, Biczó 2004; 2005: 21–42).

Their sociocultural reality is a transcultural social space in the sense that it requires a continuous successful orientation between two cultural systems of relations, to cope with the Csángó and the

Romanian cultural characteristics.⁷ Csángó people are expected not only to be able to take part in both cultural systems, but to respond to the challenges of these realities.

The two cultural realities, the Csángó and the Romanian, live side by side in the same geographical territory, but function in different levels and in different social conditions. In Moldavia, Csángó people regularly pass between the Csángó and the Romanian culture in a natural way, their everyday life is a kind of synchronous and continuous presence in both cultural realities. They possess the capability to live in a doubled life-world, in two different cultural traditions. Nowadays, their sociocultural reality is characterized by their existence between cultures, a particular network of Csángó and Romanian cultural features, in which Csángó people develop diverse relationships to each locality. As a matter of fact, the villagers are usually bilinguals and put both the local Hungarian dialect and the Romanian language, or more precisely, the regional variation of Romanian they speak, as well as the related and encoded cultural attributes to good use in order to apply the suitable attitudes to the challenges of their transcultural reality.

Nevertheless, our emblematic, yet rather commonplace statement that the Moldavian Csángós are not allowed to study in their mother tongue is not exclusively valid any more. Neither secular, nor clerical intellectuals had a chance to study in Hungarian until the 1990s, except for a short decade from 1947 to 1958/59. For example in Klézse/Cleja, Pusztina/Pustiana, and even in Lujzikalagor Hungarian schools were launched, but due to lack of resources, materials, unsuitable conditions for teaching – e.g. some of the teaching personnel did not speak Romanian fluently; there were not enough textbooks or blackboards to use day by day; and inhabitants of Csángó settlements debated the legitimacy of founding Hungarian schools – usually these initiatives

failed (see the details in Vincze 2004: 20, 44–50).⁸ After the revolution in 1989, attempts were made to take up the challenge of democratic opportunities for having Hungarian lessons, regularly and legally, for children. However, these attempts were isolated and not well organized, without the necessary official support and further faced a strong opposition of local authorities.⁹ All initiatives resulted in failure; none of them achieved their aims in a longer term. Despite the difficulties at the beginning, a quite successful schooling program exists today, as one result of the course of actions carried out by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia (*Asociația Maghiarilor Ceangăi din Moldova* in Romanian, *Moldvai Csángómagyarok Szövetsége* in Hungarian, its abbreviation is *MCSMSZ*).

After the fall of state socialism in 1989, besides the similar ambitions of other ethnocultural minorities of Romania, the Csángós also initiated official actions in the interest of establishing their own lobby group. The Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia came into existence in 1991 (in 2007 the organization had 1147 members). The Association has a wide range of programs and is engaged in various social, health, economic, religious, and cultural activities. The organization aims to provide facilities for members of the Csángó community to have better living conditions, a more modern living environment and to develop a more conscious and reflexive relation towards their own cultural heritage – a heritage they consider to be Hungarian: specifically, to support the community in discovering their own socio-cultural background and become aware of its value.

It is also useful to keep in mind, that there has always been a local, Catholic intelligentsia, comprised of local priests, teachers, and the mayor after the political shift; this intelligentsia filled the local

7. First Péter Niedermüller gave an example of transnational flows in a market place in one of the Moldavian Csángó villages (Niedermüller 2005: 52–66), then Veronika Lajos drew a parallel between transnational social space and the Moldavian Csángó local conditions (Lajos 2006: 177–184, 2008: 67–83). Lehel Peti discussed the relationship between transnational flows and religion (Peti 2008: 305–328). For the current use of the multi-layer diaspora notion in Hungary see Keményfi 2010: 191–209.

8. According to the statistics and historical records only 12 pupils went to the Hungarian school while 399 attended the Romanian one in Lujzikalagor at the beginning of 1951. The findings were quite similar in other Csángó villages. For more details see Vincze 2004: 44–48.

9. Attila Hegyeli, the initiator of the schooling program led by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia, states that there are two periods in teaching Hungarian after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime in 1989 in the Moldavian Csángó villages: 1. before the turn of the millennium and 2. after it (see in details Hegyeli 2001: 183–189). The latter is the period when a centrally organized schooling program started to develop in more than one Csángó village.

governing and leading positions in the Moldavian Csángó villages. But since they regard themselves Romanians, the Hungarian-speaking scholarly and public discourse of East-Central Europe has not considered them to be representatives of the intelligentsia of Moldavian Csángó culture. Instead, the Hungarian discourse is keen on highlighting their Csángó origins to emphasize that they had turned against, rather than being supportive of, the Hungarian culture (Bodó 2004: 156).

As regards the question of teaching, the schooling program is one of the main activities of the Association. Teachers at the outset, were generally Hungarians from Transylvania or Hungary; lately they are more frequently members of the Csángó community. The program started to operate officially in state schools of Bákó/Bacău county in the 2002/2003 school year. Since 2000 study groups had begun in several Csángó villages, for example in Klézse/Cleja, Pusztina/Pustiana, Diószén/Giosen and in the 2006 and 2007 school years in Lujzikalagor as well. In 2012/2013, the teaching program functioned in 25 villages and involved circa 2000–2200 pupils.¹⁰

3. Conflicts, encounters, clashes

My experience as a teacher in Lujzikalagor started seven years ago, when I was employed by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia as a teacher of Hungarian for a school year, outside the state school curriculum. I undertook the post, because I wanted to spend a longer period in one of the Moldavian Csángó settlements to conduct long-term field-work. In spite of the fact that researchers tend to treat people teaching Hungarian in Csángó villages as ones engaged in activities aiming to ‘rescue the Csángós, their dialect and archaic culture’, my decision was not made to ‘save the Csángós’, or to ‘restore the traditional Csángó world’, neither did I intend to use the information and experience gathered during teaching for supporting

the idea of the structural immobility of the Csángó culture. Teaching in the village basically served the purpose of making my continuous presence in Lujzikalagor acceptable and sensible for the locals. On the one hand, this choice meant a determined role in the local setting from the beginning, with all its advantages and disadvantages. On the other hand, I regarded it as an opportunity to enable the children to get an insight into a kindred linguistic reality (Hungarian) – that of standard Hungarian, as well as into the kindred cultural reality; irrespective of the extent to which they would later consider it to be their own, determinant of their lives or their identities.

The first difficulty came with finding an accommodation. First, an elderly woman, who lived in a big house of many rooms with her husband and the youngest daughter of their eight children, who was 15 years old at the time, agreed to let me one room. She had found nothing wrong with the children to be taught Hungarian in Lujzikalagor, and she could get extra income by letting out one of her rooms. However, her decision was overwritten by the lack of consent by other members of her family, especially her children working abroad. In order to avoid family conflict, the woman withdrew her earlier promise to let out a room to the unknown teacher from Hungary. In this case, the role of the Hungarian teacher, representing the so-called “Hungarian-ness,” became a potential source of danger that could affect the life of the whole family. This danger derived partly from the conflict within the family, and partly from the more general community sentiment that events and actions related to Hungarians are to be viewed with a bit of suspicion. This perspective has been rooted in the local public opinion of the turn of the millennium (the year 2000). Subsequently, I rented a room in the home of another community member.

The introduction of Hungarian lessons in Lujzikalagor faced several challenges and created several conflicts that I will outline below. These challenges all centered on the ideological issues surrounding the use of Hungarian – whether it be a standard or local variety. Similar to issues related to securing housing, there were difficulties in securing a site for the classes. Eventually the question of accommodating the classes was solved, as a local resident supportive of the work of the Association of Csángós agreed to let his now empty convenience store for the purpose of teaching Hungarian. The owner stated that

10. Read more on the Hungarian language competence of pupils in Papp Z. & Márton 2014: 7–32. Since the beginning of 2012 the education program has not been operated by the Association of Csángó-Hungarians in Moldavia, but by the Hungarian Teacher’s Association of Romania (abbreviation in Hungarian *RMPSZ*).

‘the more languages a person knows the better it is for him/her and the easier to get ahead in life’ (field notes 11 October 2006) giving this as a reason why he would enroll his own children to the Hungarian school as well.



Picture 2. Hungarian school operated in this building in 2006–2007. Lujzikalagor/Luizi-Călugăra. September, 2012. Photo: Veronika Lajos.

Teaching started in early November, and took place outside the framework of compulsory state education. At the beginning, and for several weeks, it was only attended by the children of the local members of the Association, and those of their relatives and friends. When I started my work as a teacher, the number of pupils in the study group was no more than six or seven; their age ranging from five/six to nine. Two of them spoke and understood Hungarian fluently – one could consider it as their “mother tongue” in the sense that they could express themselves the best in this language at this stage of their life – since their parents used to live in Budapest for more than ten years. The rest had a passive knowledge of the local Hungarian dialect because of having listened to their parents’ conversations with their grandparents, in spite of the fact that their parents usually spoke to each other in Romanian and always did so to them.

After a few weeks the principal of the local school and a history teacher showed up in “our school”. They came in, looked around, and threatened me, the teacher, in Romanian with taking away my passport, and eventually sending me to prison, for violating Romanian laws. The children were really frightened, so I closed up school for that day. In the afternoon, the local young policeman was asked to come to the school. He was puzzled why he was asked to identify the Hungarian books lying around the benches and the tables as a “Hungarian threat”.

As already mentioned above, a gradual language shift takes place in Lujzikalagor. Nowadays generally the elder generation speak and understand the local Hungarian dialect; people born from the middle of the 1970s onwards were usually taught in Romanian first, as that was the accepted and required practice in the local society. In the first few years of the 21st century the middle-aged generation could more or less speak and understand the local dialect but used Romanian generally with their children as a first choice of communication. In the Hungarian study groups the children at the age of 11–12 or older could understand my conversation with an elder member of the local society, but were not able, or did not want, to join in using the local Hungarian dialect, rather they choose to comment in Romanian. The younger ones had difficulties understanding the conversation itself.

While I was a teacher of Hungarian I was also a student of the local Hungarian dialect and the regional version of Romanian in order to be able to communicate with the local community, not only with the pupils, but also the rest of the society for whom shifting from the local Hungarian dialect to the regional variety of Romanian and back was a natural way of talking to each other even using both versions in a particular sentence. My own language use was influenced by this learning. During the classes as well as in other situations I tried to follow the local Hungarian dialect, for example using the conventional forms when greeting someone or saying goodbye (once I learnt them on the street and from other members of the local community) such as *Maradjanak békével!*, a word-to-word translation in English is “Stay in peace!” in a formal way, while in standard Hungarian people usually say *Viszontlátásra!* when leaving, meaning “See you later!”.

According to the general policy of Hungarian education in the Csángó-Hungarian Association teachers were expected to include the phrases, words, idioms and other specific characteristics of the particular local Hungarian dialect that was in use in the local society where they were teaching. For example, besides the standard version of the color term ‘yellow’ in Hungarian, which is *sárga*, I also taught the local version of the word, that being *sárig*. In Lujzikalagor 2006–2007 was the first year of Hungarian teaching which meant that I did not use a specific method of any textbooks, but started to teach the Hungarian alphabet, words (verbs and nouns), greeting forms, Christmas songs etc. using interactive methods to help students memorize them, as well as engaging students in small conversations – for example painting and drawing while learning colors, matching words with their images etc. The Hungarian study groups at this point were supposed to familiarize others with the possibility of attending Hungarian language and culture lessons in the local society and introduce the idea of studying standard Hungarian later on as part of the state school curriculum.

The next conflict surfaced in May 2007 when, according to the law, parents filed for the possibility to include Hungarian language in the school agenda for the academic year of 2007/2008. The introduction of the option of learning Hungarian language as a mother tongue in the state school of Lujzikalagor generated a situation where locals had to face conflicts in both the public and the private spheres.

On the one hand, problems occurred when, in the public sphere, locals were made to take sides in an obligatory way with either the Hungarian or the Romanian national identity in connection with language. The local government, especially the mayor and the school director tended to take advantage of their positions and official power in the locality. This meant taking steps to purposely misinform the parents, as well as humiliating the children who took part in the Hungarian study groups, in front of their classmates. These actions were for the sake of interfering with the legalization of Hungarian language in the state school agenda of Lujzikalagor. During the spring of 2008 a parent of a pupil in the Hungarian study group went to meet the teachers of her 8th grade daughter, who was not a pupil of the Hungarian lessons outside the school agenda, to talk about her grades and plans for secondary education. The mother felt that some of the teachers

implied, in one way or another, the possibility that her daughter would not get the grade she deserved and that it would have been necessary for her to go on to a grammar school in the city because she, the parent, had filed an official request for Hungarian lessons in the state school of Lujzikalagor (field notes April 2007). Consequently, weeks later she withdrew her signature from the petition to have Hungarian classes at the school as her fellow inhabitants had done so.

But that is only the surface. In the background, the dilemma of legalizing the schooling program in the village and the option of including Hungarian language in the state school agenda or denying the existence of publicly verbalized demands for Hungarian lessons is a more complex phenomenon. On the one part, it correlates to the practice of maintaining power and controlling people’s everyday life, which characterized life during the socialist period. On the other part, it is in coherence with the nature of the Csángó discourse itself. As a matter of fact, there is a scholarly struggle both on secular and clerical levels, laced with political intentions, for the virtual possession of the Csángó’s national and/or ethnic identity, their language, the local Hungarian dialect and their origin. All is arranged “above the locals’ heads”, and usually without taking their native point of view into consideration. After the fall of the socialist regime in 1989, the whole ‘Csángó issue’ itself got loaded again with strong political ambitions, provoking conflicts and pro and contra attitudes in the locals’ everyday life more and more often. This reveals how the practice of cultural appropriation in the national discourse functions and how it is deeply encoded in the Csángó discourse on both the Hungarian and the Romanian side. Furthermore, it identifies the dimensions in which the national discourse fulfils prescriptive functions in ordinary people’s modern life, such as in the case of studying a language as one’s mother tongue.

As for the native’s point of view: standing up in public for the Hungarian or the Romanian language as a mother tongue meant new kinds of border events emerging in the Csángós’ sociocultural life-world. During these border events locals interact with each other by involuntarily identifying themselves with national cultures that are unwilling to give up their own distinct otherness. That is to say, several times the inhabitants of Lujzikalagor started to react to the challenges of their life-world in a more monologic than a dialogic way.

4. Language and dialogic social conditions

The distinction made between monologic and dialogic social conditions is built from the Russian social theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of monologic and dialogic modes of behaviour. This differentiation can easily be applied to social conditions themselves, so monologic social conditions and dialogic social conditions can be examined. The former means that people tend to speak and act without acknowledging the others in anything more than a superficial and objectified way (Bakhtin 1981, 1986). They conceive the world as divided along precise, rigid and generally hierarchical boundaries, a separateness of individual actors and discrete categories. The dialogic conditions, however, seem to be an opportunity for social actors to be able and urged to take each other into account (Bell et al. 2006: 29–30). People maintain openness to other's concerns and views and envision their place in social life as an interactive part of the constantly changing whole. Social actors of dialogic social conditions even regard their own categories and language with a similarly open and interactive outlook.

The Moldavian Csángós are situated in dialogic social conditions and live in a transcultural social space. The Csángó culture itself, as well as the socio-cultural life-world of the Csángós, are also dialogic entities reflexively responding to recent changes and entering into dialogues with differing modernization processes of today. However, attention has to be drawn to the fact that pure monologic or dialogic cultures do not exist in the world; the monologic and dialogic social conditions usually have the role of a dominant character of a culture or of social life. Of course, not all the Csángó people act and behave as purely dialogic social actors but, on the basis of my field experience in Moldavia, inhabitants could be considered as, in general, having a more dialogic than monologic approach to the world, in comparison with other people, such as Romanians living in the same general context.

The conflict generated by the process of officially designating a mother tongue also constrained local Csángós to designate a national identity, either the Hungarian or the Romanian, as within this context, a bicultural identity is highly contested. The action of selecting one of them also means excluding the other. Furthermore, the new conflict

coming up as a result of the potential to offer Hungarian language education in Csángó areas denotes the potential shift from more dialogic social conditions to more monologic ones, resulting potentially in people starting to lose openness and reflexive attitudes toward novelties. This might further lead to people beginning to build up their life-world along more hierarchical and severe boundaries generated by national ideas.

The conflicts that the legal initiation of instruction in standard Hungarian language in state school agenda generated occurred in the private life and hence affected the welfare of a family. I have already mentioned the case of the elderly woman who refused to rent a room to the Hungarian teacher in favour of avoiding the conflict with her adult children. Here I shall bring up another example. Conflicts are also generated between family members when a child wants to take part in the Hungarian study group, but their parents do not permit them to do so, or when a mother acknowledges the advantages of studying another language, learning about the Hungarian cultural heritage, but the father does not want to get involved in these misty and challenging events or vice versa. Locals usually do not take the risk of a more serious conflict in the family due to a desire to learn standard Hungarian.

There was a family with two children in primary education. The children were born in Hungary during the time their parents were employed there. The family moved back to their homeland years later, around 2000–2002. Each of the parents took turns working abroad, usually in Italy, while the other stayed home with the children. At that time the mother had been working in Italy for some time, while the husband and the children stayed at home in Lujzikalagor. When I visited them to have the official form filled out requesting Hungarian as a mother tongue being taught as part of the state school curriculum the father was kidding his son that he should complete the form since he studies Hungarian because, quote, 'I am a Csángó' (field notes 24 April 2007). When his wife returned for a short visit at the beginning of May she preferred that the whole family would stay away from the potential harms, for example social exclusion, bullying at school, resulting from filling in and signing the official request. As a consequence, the children never attended the Hungarian study group again from May until the end of the school year.

Another specific attribution of the Moldavian Csángós worth mentioning is the tendency to take ethnic identity as an instrument and use it for one's own interest, either as a long-term life strategy or for a short-term advantage (Simon 2012: 172). To join the Hungarian study group outside of state school education in Lujzikalagor also involves various economic and cultural benefits, such as the annual support of the Hungarian state provided to the Hungarian minorities living outside the current state borders, and the trips and summer camps abroad organized for Csángó children.¹¹ Some of the parents recognized the importance of studying and its function as a means of social mobilization, working either in Romania or abroad. The schooling program can also provide a scholarship for the talented children to study in a Hungarian high school or at a university, either in Transylvania or in the even more preferred Hungary.

However, the definite either-or choice is still not so widespread in the Csángós' everyday life, in the transcultural social space. There, the borders between the Csángó culture and the Romanian environment are constituted in a very reflexive way according to the actual situations. Several scholars consider the non-presence of a singular and invariable identity to be a distinct deficiency of Csángó people, usually laying the blame on the Romanian authorities. This approach also suggests an image of people who change 'identity' from one situation to another and make use of the potential identities afforded by the actual conditions as they are conceptualized as being individuals who have already lost their own identity. While holding on to this scholarly position, these scholars fail to realize the emergence and function of transcultural spaces and glocality (about the paradigm of glocality see Meyrowitz 2004: 21–30). The contemporary processes of globalization and the transnational perspective have drawn attention to the pitfalls and blind spots of methodological nationalism and opened up new vistas to reconsider the conceptual apparatus of social sciences since the 1980–90s. There is no such exceptional geographical location that

11. These activities draw attention to the dynamic nature of ethnicity and ethnic encounters when ethnic identity is manifested in different ways according to the situation and as part of a complex whole. This is the constructivist approach of ethnicity introduced by Fredrik Barth (Barth 1969). Boglárka Simon (2012) follows this tradition concerning the Csángós' identity.

is not interconnected to recent global flows, not even the one where the Moldavian Csángós live, which is per se a multicultural space, a transcultural social world¹² where encountering the Other, the local Romanian and the local Hungarian, day by day is a natural condition influencing processes of self-identification and self-differentiation.

At the same time, in the case of the Moldavian Csángós the undertaking of varying cultural identities according to the particular circumstances is likely to be a special capability tied to the ability to become aware of and appreciate the peculiarities of the Other's culture, for example the Romanian one. Choosing a singular, constant and all-pervading identity construction, a national identity, would impede local Csángós from possessing the ability to understand and conceive the Other, the Stranger and one's own self in parallel. It would hinder the potential identification of one's own self with the Other.

5. Non-synchronism and the Moldavian Csángó social space

In the following I shall return to the second and third implications of our starting point, the status of the local Hungarian dialect in the transcultural social space of Moldavian Csángós. The position of the language in the Csángós' sociocultural life-world, naturally, differs from the position of the language in a national frame. In the dialogic transcultural conditions, the language is usually a functional means to communicate, to understand the others, and to be understood by others. However, in accordance with their own experiences, locals do link emotions to language, both to the local Hungarian dialect and to the regional Romanian one, but this has nothing to do with the national affiliation related to a singular national language used on a daily basis.

Language is a useful device in the Csángó culture, an instrument for locals to be able to cope with various situations and challenges that occur in everyday life as a result of the co-existence of a more traditional Csángó reality and a more modernized, as well as globalized, Romanian one of today. The simultaneous presence of

12. For a more detailed view on transcultural social space concerning the Moldavian Csángó society see the author's other paper in this volume.

differing sociocultural realities leads us to another special feature of the structure of the Csángó culture.

People in the Moldavian Csángó micro-world have had to face a number of new cultural, social, and economic influences in the time period following the change of the political regime. However, modernization did not come as a singular challenge for the entire socio-cultural set of peasant knowledge at once, but it rather shaped, and continues to shape to this day, Moldavian social reality gradually, through a series of interactions. The conflicts generated by intensive and quick changes have dissolved in various parts of the local culture differently and with varying degrees of intensity. The discrepancies concerning the time and the way of adaptation to these make it possible for us to observe the process of coordinating the individual practices that are characteristic of specific time periods of social history.

As a result of modernization and of migration processes, the structure of the Moldavian socio-cultural life world has also changed; in addition to the transformation of its numerous factors, a structural modification has taken place. I interpret this structural shift in the framework of the concept of ‘compound non-synchronism’. The transformed Moldavian Csángó scene can be correlated to the phenomenon of ‘*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*’, or ‘*Ungleichzeitigkeit*’ for short. It translates into English as ‘**the synchronism of the non-synchronous**’, or ‘non-synchronism’ for short, emerging in Ernst Bloch’s footsteps in cultural philosophy as well as in the field of social sciences.¹³ The notion of ‘*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*’ generally refers to the coexistence of two cultural systems situated in the same geographical environment that differ from one another in points of their structural nature, conceptualization of space and time, as well as in ways of thinking (see international examples from South-Korea and rural Northern China: Jeh-hong 2004: 8–33; Flitsch 2008: 265–288). The term was first introduced in ethnography by Hermann Bausinger and, with reference to the Moldavian Csángó culture, first employed by Vilmos Táncoz, then among others by Lehel Peti (Bausinger 1989: 24–37; see also Kashuba 1999/2004: 151–154; in the Moldavian

Csángó context see Táncoz 1996: 97–173; Kotics 1999: 56; Hegyeli 2005: 226–234; Peti 2007: 95, 2008: 305–338).

On the basis of the experience gathered during field work, it may be stated that at the present time, a special case of “non-synchronism” can be observed in Moldavian Csángó villages, which we might term combined or “compound non-synchronism”. The notion of “compound non-synchronism” covers socio-cultural systems that operate simultaneously side by side, the same way as the term “non-synchronism” does. The differing social and historical horizons are located in the socio-cultural space of non-synchronism, intertwined with each other and forming a peculiar unity. The population of Lujzikalagor realizes this unity within their experiential horizon concerning their own existence consciously and under pressure at the same time by coordinating the various norms and the occasionally contradictory experiences.

The attribute “compound” is supposed to call attention to the fact that Moldavian Csángó life-world has a multiple structure, in which – at times – there might be multiple differences in level between parallel socio-cultural arenas within the system of the chain of socio-historical places, which is often interpreted as development. Structural complexity then highlights the simultaneous layering of socio-cultural systems identified with different socio-historical time-periods, as well as the combination of elements of varying diachronic depths. The arenas or stages of Moldavian quotidian existence may be associated with a variety of forms of differing historical dimensions and experiential horizons: 1. traditional ~ “village, local”; 2. socialist modernization ~ “Romanian urban due to socialist urbanization”; 3. post-socialist ~ “Romanian urban following the change of political regime”; and/or 4. late modern, or post-modern ~ “western European metropolitan” sets of values (or socio-cultural layers representing specific cultural practices) transmitted by one’s children or other family members working abroad.¹⁴

The notion of “compound non-synchronism” identified as a structural peculiarity of Moldavian socio-cultural existence illustrates

13. As Bloch (1935/1977: 22.) puts it: ‘Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, by virtue of the fact that they may all be seen today. But that does not mean that they are living at the same time with others.’

14. Since the end of 1990s many young and middle age adults from Moldavian Csángó villages have worked in Western European countries, especially in Italy and Spain.

the multi-layered structural characteristic of Moldavian Csángó culture today, while in Lujzikalagor it expresses the simultaneous presence of various, historically different, experiential horizons at work in everyday existence arranged in a complex system. This phenomenon, the simultaneous conglomeration of cultural systems, historical time dimensions, and experiential spaces fundamentally determine the system of relationships between individuals, the communal responses to modern challenges, as well as the relatively flexible and affirmative but also selective adaptive approaches.

For a better understanding, I will illustrate the relationship between this structural complexity, the compound non-synchronism and the challenges of Hungarian education through some examples. It is commonly known that language was not considered to constitute a significant part of a man's identity before the national movements in the 18th–19th century. The emergence of nations and states, the necessity to rule all the inhabitants of a certain geographical entity gave importance to a standardized and officially recognized version of language(s) mainly used in state administration and education, while locals tended to follow their earlier linguistic practices in everyday situations. The local Hungarian dialect is characterized by the cultural layer of traditional, rural, Csángó that can usually be observed in the domains where locals regularly use the dialect – such as in agriculture or in domestic work. Locals tend not to attach monologic features to the local Hungarian dialect. It means that they create new words and expressions with ease in creative ways, similarly to the practice in other local societies on a language periphery, to be able to define and describe the changes of the modernizing and globalizing world around them. We shall take the example of *szépbűzű*, which is *öblítő* 'fabric softener' in the so-called standard Hungarian, and 'rinse' in English, but translates word to word as something which has a 'nice scent'.

Both the standard Romanian and Hungarian language correspond to the modern, urban level and are simultaneously presented in the structure of the Csángó culture with the local Hungarian dialect. Due to the more and more frequent presence of the phenomena such as patriotic feelings, national affiliations to language, and cultural exclusion implied in the notion of the standardized national language, locals have recently tended to act, think and behave in a more monologic

than a dialogic way, taking each other into account decreasingly.¹⁵ The reflexive nature of a Csángó individual's behaviour, formerly adaptive towards changing realities and new challenges, tends to be more rigid and hierarchic, preferring precise boundaries. Within these boundaries people are considered to constitute a closed community while identifying themselves with a certain national identity, and outside of it people are not acknowledged in anything more than a superficial and objectified way.

6. Closing remarks

To sum it up, I wish to emphasise the fact that neither the Hungarian nor the Romanian academic field have realized the significant cultural value of the transcultural social space in the Moldavian Csángó communities and the dialogicity of the Csángós' social life. This latter value reveals the potential of understanding and conceiving the Other, the Stranger and one's own self at the same time by similar categories as well as the categories generally used by each culture (Biczó 2004). I also wish to call attention to the fact that anyone who wants to reach a social position as an intellectual or a leader of the Csángós is forced to identify themselves with a certain national identity to be legally accepted outside of the Csángó community. Practically, no other alternative exists for an intellectual because of the outside pressure on them to identify themselves as Hungarian or Romanian, with all the constraints of a national identity.

However, the operation of the transcultural social space, the dialogic social conditions and the assimilation and dissimulation processes determine the locals' life day by day. The characteristics of these realities set the status, the role and the space for mobility of a person in the Moldavian Csángó local societies. This can be illustrated by a suggestive example of a teacher with a Csángó origin, working in the schooling program of the Csángó Association, who regularly speaks with her daughter, in accordance with the generally accepted mode of language usage in her village, in Romanian.

15. See Tanczos 2012a about the language ideologies in Moldvian Csángó villages.

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